

Monday Morning Rewind – September 8, 2008

Good morning! On Sabbath we continued our series on the life of Joseph and discovered the meaning of divine favor. To be favored is to have “the stamp of divine graciousness and influence reflected in your life, producing acceptance, benefit, joy, liberality, pleasure and thankfulness.”

When God gives you favor you are of benefit to others. You are a joy to be around. People consider you to be a gift from God and they are thankful for the grace you bring into their lives. The favor of God was obvious in Joseph’s life. Rewind to Genesis 39:2-5 and you’ll see that everything Joseph touched turned to blessing. And don’t miss the significance of the fact that Joseph was favored in unfavorable circumstances. He was blessed despite the mess of being in Egypt, in slavery, and in a strange place. Remember, it is possible for Jesus to favor you even in unfavorable circumstances. Everything doesn’t have to be ideal before God can use you.

Your life should prove God exists—even in the midst of a bad situation. If you can live gracefully only in ideal conditions, you haven’t done anything special. “If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even ‘sinners’ love those who love them. And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even ‘sinners’ do that” (Luke 6:32, 33).

To live gracefully in “Egypt”; to live gracefully in a pit; to bless in the midst of mess—is to live in a way that proves God exists. Joseph was a slave in Potiphar’s house, he could have been bitter and rebellious. Instead he was better and respectful. What Potiphar saw of Joseph’s life led him to see the Lord. What do people see when they observe you? Do you cause others to believe in God by your actions, or cause them to believe in the devil?

King Hezekiah and Joseph shared something in common—God’s favor. Rewind to 2 Kings 18:5, 6 and note the formula for How to live in God’s favor:

1. Trust the Lord. Hezekiah took refuge in and boldly placed his confidence in the Lord. Make the Lord your hiding place. Take shelter in Jesus
2. Hold Fast to the Lord. (Hebrew = abide, follow hard after, be joined [together], pursue hard, stick.) Hezekiah followed hard after the Lord. He pursued Him and His ways and “stuck to Him.”
3. Obey the Lord.

Even when you’re in trouble, in the pits, in shock, in despair, and in a strange place, you are still in God’s hand and if you trust in, stick to, and obey Him, you can be in-service to others and a blessing to everyone, everywhere and everything you touch.

God wants us to live in His favor and, like Joseph, be a blessing to others. But being favored by God doesn’t mean a life free of trouble. Potiphar’s wife wanted to commit sexual sin with Joseph, thus challenging and threatening his favor. (See Genesis 39:7-20.) Joseph maintained his integrity and refused to sin against God, but his reward was prison. For the second time, Joseph found himself in a pit.

Did God’s favor fail? No. Joseph teaches us that sometimes God’s favor gets you in trouble. Who was more favored than Jesus? Luke 2:52 says that Jesus grew in “favor with God and men.” His life was favorable, gracious, sweet-smelling to God and others. At His baptism God said “This is my Son in whom I am well pleased.” And yet, all Jesus’ favor didn’t prevent Him from traveling down the *Via Dolorosa*—the way of suffering. And this we Christians sometimes forget. The way of God’s favor is the way of the cross because the life of God always follows the death to self. And it is often the trials we endure that put self to death. That’s why James says, “Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.” (James 1:2, 3)

Joseph was in Egypt, in trouble again, in another strange place, [Vs. 20-21] “But while Joseph was there in the prison, the Lord was with Him...” God was still there—loving and blessing and favoring his son, and yes, keeping His promise!

Where are you today? In the penthouse or the outhouse? Are you riding high or laying low? Are your circumstances favorable or unfavorable? Know that wherever you are, *God is*. He hasn’t failed or abandoned you.

To have God’s favor means to be blessed despite the mess. Favor doesn’t mean perfection, nor does it mean protection from the trials and tribulations of life. It does mean that you have the Divine Presence wherever you go and the Divine Promise of abundant life now and in the world to come. It means that you have a heart that follows hard after God and your life smells of His perfume no matter where you find yourself—in trouble, in a pit, in a strange place, in a hospital bed, in financial distress, or in prison. God is still with you even as He was with Joseph.

Now go be a blessing and smell up your home, workplace and neighborhood with the fragrance of God! –
Pastor Randy